



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



Volume 9, Number 1, February 2023

[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

by Claudia Browner

The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) now offers a new publication, the [Accessibility Guide—A toolkit for accessible communications in the workplace](#), on its website. This guide provides instructions on how to plan and facilitate accessible meetings and events, and create accessible communications. The guide also features links to online trainings to learn about making events, documents and emails, multimedia, websites, and social media content accessible to all users. In addition, it provides tips on establishing inclusive policies and practices.

Originally created for state team members, in collaboration with the Office of Administration's Diversity & Inclusion Council, the GCD modified the guide for public use.

The Accessibility Guide can be printed out as a desk reference, or used online with links to the training components.

You can view and download the guide on the Disability Portal at <https://disability.mo.gov/files/accessibility-guide-public.pdf>



DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGISLATIVE DAY 2023

by Laura Mueth

Disability Rights Legislative Day (DRLD) 2023 is next month on Wednesday, March 1.

A planning committee comprised of self-advocates and representatives from various disability organizations including the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council and GCD has been working hard to plan a day focused on issues that individuals and groups told us were important to them.



This year's event will focus on transportation, employment, and the caregiver crisis. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from legislators and dynamic self-advocates during the rally portion. Following the rally, in-person attendees can take advantage of being at the Capitol in Jefferson City to meet with legislators about issues discussed during the rally or any issue meaningful to them.

Virtual participants will have the option to attend afternoon breakouts, or independently schedule virtual legislator visits. You can stay updated on DRLD happenings at the [event website](#) at <https://DRLD.org>. Individuals who want to be part of this great day and share in the **We the People** atmosphere can register at [DRLD Registration](#).

LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION PROJECT WEBINARS

by Claudia Browner

It's not too late to join the Governor's Council on for a free Legislative Education Project (LEP) webinar to learn about the legislative process in Missouri and find out about opportunities to become more active in creating positive public policies for people with disabilities. The GCD has already held three webinars, and two more are available in March.

The LEP webinars are open to individuals or organizations that are new to the legislative process, or those who need additional information about disability policies or proposed legislation that impact people with disabilities.

Each webinar will include information on the legislative process, communicating with legislators, and current state bills related to disability.



The final two webinars will be offered on Thursday, March 16, 2023, at 10:00 AM and at 7:00 PM.

WebEx software will be used to conduct each webinar. Registration is required to attend. Please complete the LEP Registration Form. If accommodations are needed, please register at least two weeks prior to the webinar date so accommodations can be arranged in a timely matter. For more information about the LEP, please visit the LEP web page at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/LEP.htm>

APPLY NOW FOR 2023 MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

by Rachel Rackers

Applications for the 2023 [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm) (MO-YLF) are now being accepted and available on our website at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm>. The deadline for delegate applications is April 15, 2023. As a reminder, the dates are July 18-22nd and the event is held at the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO. While at MO-YLF, the delegates will gain leadership skills, knowledge, self-confidence, and much more.



During the week, delegates will learn a lot of valuable information. Some activities the delegates participate in include a community service project, a mentor event, a visit and mock legislative session at the State Capitol, an employment event focusing on career exploration, mock interview exercises, networking, and tips on when and how to disclose disability status, information on volunteer opportunities, and a resource fair. Throughout the week participants will also engage in fun social events including adaptive sports night, a talent show, and a dance. At the end of the week, the teams have a chance to present their experiences and what they learned to family members, staff and sponsors at the closing banquet. Also on the last day, parents have the opportunity to participate in the resource fair and parent information session.

If you know of a student with disabilities who has leadership potential, please share the information about this exciting program with them. GCD is looking for applicants from all areas of the state. MO-YLF is free to the students who are selected. This is all made possible because of donations and sponsorships.

If you are interested in volunteering as a staff member, please apply by May 1 at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm>. For questions, please contact the Governor's Council on Disability at (800) 877-8249 or (573) 751-2600.

THIRD ANNUAL VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT COMING IN MARCH

The GCD team along with our partnering organizations is getting geared up for the 3rd Annual [Virtual Leadership Summit](#) (VLS) for high school students with disabilities, to be held virtually on March 4, 2023. Participants will meet virtually with leaders in the disability community and hear from mentors, alumni, and keynote speakers about the importance of goal setting, self-advocacy, and leadership.

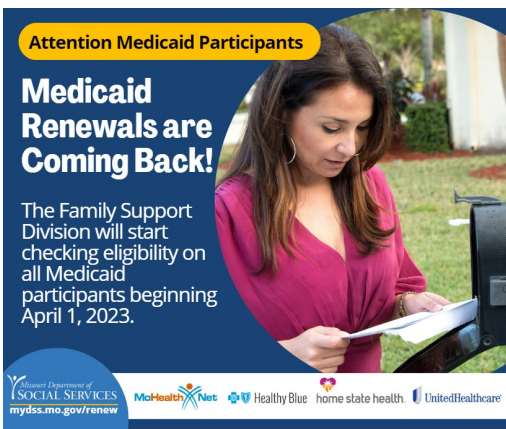


Our team is looking forward to connecting with youth throughout the different parts of the state. During the Virtual Leadership Summit, the youth will get a small glimpse into what the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum is and build connections with other youth and alumni.

The application deadline for this year's Virtual Leadership Summit has already passed. Be sure to watch for announcements and the application this fall for the 2024 event. For more information on the Virtual Leadership Summit please visit our website at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/vls.htm>

For updates information on both the MO-YLF and VLS, you can also follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/MOLeadershipForum>

MEDICAID ANNUAL RENEWALS COMING BACK



The Department of Social Services (DSS) recently announced that beginning April 1, the Family Support Division will be re-starting its annual eligibility reviews and renewals for everyone who is currently participating in MO HealthNet. According to DSS, more than 1.4 million Missourians have healthcare coverage through MO HealthNet and will be impacted by the return of these annual renewals.

MO HealthNet participants are asked to get ready for renewals by keeping their contact information up to date so they can get important updates in the mail. If their address has changed in the last 3 years, they will need to notify the Family Support Division by reporting a change [online](#), visiting their [local resource center](#), or calling 855-373-4636.

DSS is asking partners, advocates, and providers to help spread the word so Missourians can stay informed. Visit the website at mydss.mo.gov/renew for more information.

Source: Department of Social Services website

CAPITOL ACCESS GUIDE

by Claudia Browner



Are you planning a visit to the Missouri State Capitol in Jefferson City? Do you want to learn about accessibility at the capitol, where to find hearing rooms, parking, and how to participate in a tour? Then the Capitol Access Guide will be a great resource for you.

Created by the Governor's Council on Disability in collaboration with Missouri Assistive Technology, this guide is designed to provide information about accessibility in the state capitol so that Missourians with disabilities can fully participate in state government activities. Direction is provided for requesting access accommodations, such as interpreters or electronic materials, for legislative activities, capitol tours and for rotunda activities. Locations are noted for accessible parking, entrances, restrooms, and elevators to the House and Senate gallery areas.

The guide is available online at <https://at.mo.gov/information-resources-publications/cap-access-booklet.html>

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Joan Bergstrom, Ed. D., Lee's Summit
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Traci Ritter, Cape Girardeau
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- James Trout, St. Louis
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Rachel Rackers, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

SIGN UP NOW FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING

by Claudia Browner



Niagara University Disability Awareness Training has received funding from the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council to educate anyone involved in emergency planning, preparedness, response, and recovery as it pertains to individuals with disabilities and access and functional needs.

Members of the disability community, including disability advocates and organizations, along with emergency management and public health agencies are invited and encouraged to attend one of the upcoming trainings in their regions of the state.

Training sessions will be held in nine different regions of the state, and are currently open for registration in Springfield, Independence, Columbia, and St. Louis. If you have questions or are not sure which training you should attend, contact the Missouri DD Council at moddc@moddcouncil.org

To register for the training in your area, or to find out when a training will be held in your region, visit <https://frdat.niagara.edu/training/trainings/>

FILING YOUR TAXES

by Claudia Browner

Tax season is here and for many people filing taxes can be confusing and stressful. The National Disability Institute has put together some great information and resources to help you prepare and find out where to file our taxes for free, tax credits you might be eligible for, and how you can make the most of your tax refund money.

Check out the information at

<https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/financial-resilience-center/taxes-and-tax-prep/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **March 1, 2023**
[Disability Rights Legislative Day, State Capitol, Jefferson City/Virtual](#)
- **March 4, 2023**
[Virtual Leadership Summit](#)
- **April 3-4, 2023**
[Power Up Assistive Technology Conference & Expo, Columbia](#)
- **May 2-4, 2023**
[Annual Charting the LifeCourse Showcase, Kansas City](#)
- **May 21-24, 2023**
[National ADA Symposium, Kansas City](#)
- **July 18-22, 2023**
[Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#)

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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GCD AWARDS LEADERS IN INCLUSION AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

by Claudia Browner

On April 4, the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) presented its annual awards for Inclusion and Youth Leadership at the Power Up Assistive Technology Conference in Columbia. More than 500 conference attendees and exhibitors witnessed the awards presentation to the 2022 Inclusion and Youth Leadership Award winners, and enjoyed hearing a musical performance by the 10th annual Youth Leadership Award winner.

In its 31st year, the annual [Inclusion Award](#) recognizes individuals, agencies, employers or organizations that exemplify best practices in the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in one or more of these aspects: education, employment, housing, leisure activities, transportation, universal design, and website accessibility.

2022 Inclusion Award winner: Tim Lewin, Embassy Suites St. Louis – St. Charles



Embassy Suites St. Louis – St. Charles and General Manager Tim Lewin have demonstrated excellent inclusive practices for many years by creating a dynamic, supportive culture that welcomes individuals with disabilities to the hospitality industry. Through partnerships with local programs, individuals with disabilities learn hard and soft skills of working at a hotel. These experiences give students an up-close look at competitive employment. Embassy uses a simple mentor model to welcome individuals with disabilities and reports that inclusion has naturally become part of its culture.

The business has gone above and beyond to mentor and hire employees with disabilities, which has led to adults with disabilities comprising 25% of the total staff. Lewin models kindness, understanding, and a work ethic beyond reproach, which leads everyone on his team to do the same. He is an inclusion champion in every way.

Honorable Mention: Brock Sousa, Hannibal Public High School



Brock Sousa is a teacher for the Hannibal Public High School, but other titles include coach, advocate, mentor, friend, and jack-of-all-trades. Sousa embodies inclusion and employment first in a rural area. He has been helping others see the importance of a diverse workforce, inclusive practices, and community outreach opportunities. This started with the BEST Program (Basic Employment Skills Training) in 2017. In the first BEST year, four students
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applied for jobs and began working at Hannibal Regional Hospital during the school day through the school year. Today, the program has grown to 16 students, 4 community job sites, and many continued agency partnerships.

Sousa strives to give students every opportunity possible to gain work experience and access to their local communities so that they can be included and involved.

The [Youth Leadership Award](#) recognizes young individuals with disabilities for their leadership and advocacy efforts that positively impact the lives of people with disabilities in their communities. The winners of the 10th annual Youth Leadership Awards for 2022 are:

Youth Leadership Award winner: Holly Connor



Holly Connor is senior at Clayton High School in St. Louis, who is an aspiring singer, actor, and musician. Holly plans to attend Webster University this fall to pursue a degree in Vocal Performance and piano, and she is working toward becoming a voice over actor for animated films and cartoons. Holly hopes to continue to create and expand awareness, acceptance, and inclusion, especially within the Arts, as she wants arts for all.

Holly has extraordinary music skills, and her passions are performing live musical theater, singing opera, and playing instruments. She plays piano, tap dances, studies ballet, composes original music, loves telling stories, and has a natural gift of voice and comedic timing. Holly is an award-winning Braille user and has done disability awareness presentations to enlighten others. Holly does not let her disabilities interfere with sharing her message that people of all abilities can be included. Throughout her life, Holly has spread story of awareness, acceptance, and inclusion with others as she also strives to improve the quality of life of other people with disabilities.

Honorable Mention: Samantha Keeney



Samantha (Sam) Keeney is a senior at Van Buren High School, and a graduate of the 2022 Missouri Youth Leadership Forum. Sam is a very outgoing young woman. She enjoys being a member of her high school's Quiz Bowl team, and has achieved the all-conference title for two years. Sam is also a very active member of the Senior Beta Club. She does not let her disability define or limit her future. Recently, she provided a presentation at a transition conference to share her experience at the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum.

Sam plans to attend Three Rivers Community College in the fall, before attending Missouri State University in Springfield to study history and become a teacher. Her goal is to make history fun for all of her students.

Sam advocates for others, and provides support and encouragement for her peers. She is very studious about knowing the laws and regulations when it comes to having any disability. She wants everyone to be treated fairly and respectfully, and sees everyone as equal.

Congratulations to all of our winners! Read more on how you can participate in the GCD Awards programs by visiting our website at disability.mo.gov/gcd and click on [Inclusion Award](#) and [Youth Leadership Award](#).

APRIL IS AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are a group of developmental disabilities defined by significant delays in social interaction and communication.

Read about the Missouri Autism Guidelines Initiative at autismguidelines.dmh.mo.gov and visit the Missouri Department of Mental Health—Office of Autism Services' website at dmh.mo.gov/dev-disabilities/autism to find information, resources, and programs for individuals, parents, families, caregivers, and providers.



DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGISLATIVE DAY A GREAT SUCCESS

by Laura Mueth

Disability Rights Legislative Day (DRLD) was held March 1. The day was outstanding. It is estimated that more than four hundred people filled the Capitol Rotunda and surrounding areas, and one hundred eighty-two (182) joined virtually to hear from self-advocates, a parent, legislators, First Lady Teresa Parson, and Treasurer Vivek Malek.

After the hour long rally concluded, those at the Capitol were encouraged to visit with legislators to share their personal experiences around employment, transportation, the caregiver crisis, or anything else they wanted to discuss with legislators with the goal of helping them understand the needs of Missourians with disabilities. Fifty-four percent of participants met with at least one legislator.



For those who joined virtually and/or were unable to meet with a legislator during the afternoon, breakout sessions were held via Zoom. Nicole Noblet, a self-advocate, and Brianna Lennon, the Boone County Clerk, teamed up to discuss accessible voting. Drawing from a topic focused on at the rally, there was a session on universal mobility and advocacy presented by Enjoli Dixon. To provide an opportunity for virtual attendees to speak with legislators, the last offering was a legislator mixer with Representatives Bridget Walsh Moore and Travis Smith.

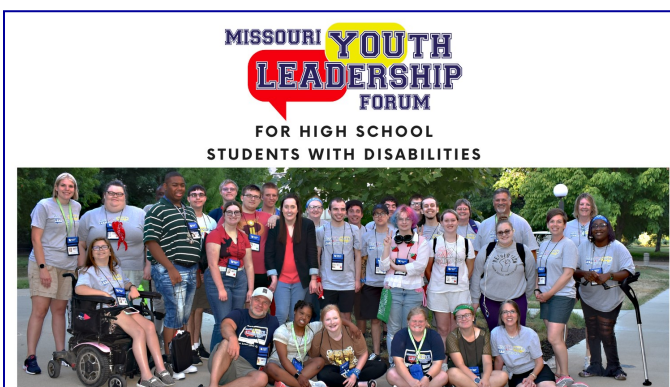
If you attended the event and have not already completed the [Disability Rights Legislative Day survey](#), please do so. The information will assist the planning committee in making next year's event even better.

If you were unable to attend the event, you can view the recording of the rally and get additional information on the [DRLD website](#).

APPLY FOR THE 2023 MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM BY THE APRIL 15 DEADLINE

by Rachel Rackers

As a reminder, the dates for the 2023 Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) are July 18-22nd and the event is held at the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO. While at MO-YLF, the delegates will gain leadership skills, knowledge, self-confidence, and much more.



Each year, the MO-YLF provides high school students with disabilities (ages 16-21) a week-long college setting experience, where they learn about disability history, advocacy, the legislative process, transition to employment or higher education, adaptive technology and adaptive sports. It is important for students with disabilities to learn skills by example and interactions with others who share similar experiences, which is what MO-YLF provides. In addition to leadership skills, the student delegates learn to set life goals, advocate for their needs, and give back to their community. There is no cost for accepted delegates to attend the program. The program is funded through sponsorships and donations.

The application deadlines are April 15, 2023 for delegates and May 1, 2023 for staff. Applications for delegates, staff, and volunteers are now available on our website.

For more information or to apply, visit <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/yf.htm>. If you have any questions about the GCD's youth programs, please contact Rachel Rackers at rachel.rackers@oa.mo.gov or 573-751-2600.

Please help us share this exciting leadership training opportunity with students, parents, teachers and colleagues!

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YOUTH PARTICIPATE IN VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

by Rachel Rackers



The Governor's Council on Disability has hosted its third annual [Virtual Leadership Summit](#). On Saturday, March 4th, thirty-three high school students who represented seventeen different Missouri counties, met virtually to learn about career development, leadership, goal setting, self-determination, self-advocacy, independent living, and more.

To kick off the event, participants heard from keynote speaker, J'den Cox about the importance of setting goals and staying positive despite barriers you face in life. They also learned a lot of valuable information from four of our Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) alumni and Vocational Rehabilitation about employment and college. The alumni shared their personal experiences in both and provided great tips and tools for self-advocacy and leadership. They also spoke about the importance of mentors, asking for accommodations, utilizing the disability services on campus, and how the MO-YLF impacted their lives. Participants then learned about self-determination, self-advocacy and independent living during a session facilitated by Jill McClintock.

A special thank you goes to Paraquad, MU Pre-Employment Transition Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and MOCIL for their involvement in the planning and staffing of the event. Also, thank you to the many panelists and MO-YLF alumni that participated in the third Virtual Leadership Summit.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **May 2-4, 2023**
Annual Charting the LifeCourse Showcase, Kansas City
<https://www.lifecoursetools.com/events/showcase-2023>
- **May 15-16, 2023**
Aging with Developmental Disabilities Conference, St. Charles
<https://www.agingwithdd.org/conference/>
- **May 21-24, 2023**
National ADA Symposium, Kansas City
<https://adasymposium.org>
- **June 5-7, 2023**
Missouri Rehabilitation Association (MRA) Conference, Osage Beach
<https://www.mo-rehab.org/conference>
- **June 26-28, 2023**
Transition Training Institute, Columbia
<https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/2023-missouri-transition-training-institute-gear-future>
- **July 18-22, 2023**
Missouri Youth Leadership Forum
<https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm>
- **August 27-29, 2023**
Real Voices—Real Choices Conference, Osage Beach
<https://www.missourimhf.org/real-voices-real-choices-conference/>

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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GCD POSTER CONTEST FOR NDEAM

by Claudia Browner

The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) is now accepting entries for the poster contest for National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)

NDEAM is celebrated nationwide each October to recognize and honor the contributions of America's workers with disabilities past and present and showcase supportive, inclusive policies and practices that benefit employees and employers alike.

The theme for the 2023 NDEAM is **Advancing Access and Equity** to recognize the importance of ensuring people with disabilities have equal opportunity to prepare for and succeed in employment.

All Missouri residents are invited to showcase their artistic talents by submitting original artwork. In addition to the 2023 theme of Advancing Access and Equity, the artwork can relate to Inclusion, Employment and Community.



Governor's Council on Disability
POSTER CONTEST
Open now - entries due 9/15/23

Submit your artwork now for a chance to be featured on the Governor's Council on Disability's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Poster

The 2023 NDEAM theme is **Advancing Access and Equity**

disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest

The winning artwork will be featured on the GCD's 2023 poster celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), which is distributed statewide.

In addition, the poster featuring the winning artwork will be published on the Disability Portal's NDEAM virtual exhibit website, GCD website, newsletter, social media platforms, and annual report. All artwork entries will be featured on the GCD's poster contest website.

Find out how you can participate at disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest

Posters must be submitted by September 15. Questions? Call 573.751.2600

2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION RESULTS

by Laura Mueth

This year's legislative session is now in the books. It was an eventful eighteen weeks. The sixteen non appropriation bills listed below were Truly Agreed To and Finally Passed (TAFP) by the House of Representatives and Senate. They were all either tracked in the [Legislative Update](#) throughout the legislative session or contain language or topics from at least one bill tracked in the Legislative Update this year.

All but one (SB 51) are waiting on Governor Parson to determine whether they will become law. He has until mid-July to sign, veto or take no action on these. SB 51 was already signed by Governor Parson and will become effective August 28, 2023.

Seven of the bills contain more than one aspect affecting individuals with disabilities. Those are HB 402, HB 417, SB 45, SB 70, SB 103, SB 106, and SB 157. Some topics are also found in more than one of the bills because legislators always attempt to provide multiple avenues for various concepts/bills to become law.



The general topic areas covered by the bills are employment, health care, mental health, awareness, public assistance, education services, taxes, use of electronic communication devices while driving, and guardianship/conservatorship and public administrator. Clicking the links to the bills will take you to the bill page where you can read the summary or the text of the bill to determine what the TAFP version contains.

Many individuals and organizations have been active throughout this year and previous years educating legislators on the issues contained in these bills. If an issue important to you did not pass this year or you have an issue/concern that needs to be addressed through legislation, legislators will begin working on ideas for 2024 later this summer.

- [HB 115](#) Modifies provisions relating to the scope of practice for physical therapists (Shields)
- [HB 202](#) Modifies provisions relating to environmental control (Francis)
- [HB 402](#) Modifies the definition of "hospital" to include rural emergency hospitals (Henderson)
- [HB 417](#) Grants to employers to encourage employees to obtain upskill credentials (Henderson)
- [HB 447](#) Modifies provisions regarding adult high schools (Davidson)
- [SB 24](#) Creates the Missouri First Responder Mental Health Initiative Act (Hough)
- [SB 45](#) Modifies provisions relating to health care—MO HealthNet (Gannon)
- [SB 51](#) Modifies provisions relating to physical therapists (Eslinger)
- [SB 70](#) Modifies provisions relating to professional licensing—Adopts the Counseling Interstate Compact (Fitzwater)
- [SB 103](#) Modifies provisions relating to judicial proceedings (Crawford)
- [SB 106](#) Modifies provisions relating to public health—Performing of certain patient examinations (Arthur)
- [SB 139](#) Establishes the "Stars and Stripes Historic Region of Missouri" (Bean)
- [SB 157](#) Modifies provisions relating to collaborative practice arrangements with nurses (Black)
- [SB 186](#) Modifies provisions relating to public safety (Brown)
- [SB 190](#) Modifies provisions relating to tax relief for seniors (Luetkemeyer)
- [SB 398](#) Enacts provisions relating to motor vehicles (Schroer)

OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATE IN MO-YLF 2023

by Rachel Rackers

Thirty-six delegates and numerous staff are getting geared up for the 19th annual [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) (MO-YLF) for high school students with disabilities to be held at the University of Missouri in Columbia, July 18-22.



Throughout the week, the delegates will be exposed to a variety of helpful information to help them in their transition from high school. One unique event during the week is the mentor luncheon, where successful individuals with disabilities from a variety of different career paths are invited to talk to the delegates and share their experiences. It is an opportunity for delegates to learn first-hand that they can lead productive and full lives. If you are a person with a disability and would like to participate in our mentor event, we would love to have you join us!

You may not know this, but the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum is completely funded from sponsorships and in-kind donations. The support from individuals and organizations, is what allows us to offer this life changing program at no cost to the youth or their families. There are several ways that you can support MO-YLF and the youth with disabilities from all over Missouri that attend our 5-day program.

One way is to be sponsor through a monetary donation. We have many different levels of [sponsorships](#), starting at just \$50! Another way to donate and contribute to MO-YLF, is through in-kind donations. Each of our delegates and staff get a welcome backpack with different types of goodies and promotional items. We will have roughly 80 backpacks to fill this year and still need items for them, but need your help to make this possible. Other items that we are needing, include: giveaway/door prizes (gift cards or larger items). Find out more about the sponsorship opportunities at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/files/2023-MO-YLF-Sponsorship-Opportunities.pdf>

A third way to donate and contribute to MO-YLF, is to donate an item off our [wish list](#). We have created a list of these items to give more opportunities for individuals and organizations to help support our program and offset some of our expenses. The MO-YLF Wish List can be found at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/files/2023-mo-ylf-wish-list.pdf>

Every single donation helps us provide this excellent experience for our delegates, whether it be monetary, in-kind, or an item off our wish list.

Lastly, if you are an organization that provides a service or supports high school students with disabilities, we want to invite you to join us for our MO-YLF Resource event on July 22nd from 10:00 am to noon at the University of Missouri Campus in Columbia. This is an opportunity to share helpful information and resources with our delegates and their parents/guardians. Our goal is to send them home with a large variety of information that will be helpful and also to the parent/guardian in supporting their youth.

If you would like to support the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum or have questions about donating or participating, please contact Rachel Rackers at rachel.rackers@oa.mo.gov.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- ☑ **Participate as a mentor**
- ☑ **Participate in the resource event**
- ☑ **Donate items**
- ☑ **Provide a sponsorship**

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- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- James Trout, St. Louis
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability—Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
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- Jennifer Pettit, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

NEW PREGNANT WORKERS FAIRNESS ACT

by Claudia Browner

Have you heard of the new [Pregnant Workers Fairness Act \(PWFA\)](#) that was signed into law in December 2022? This new law will go into effect on June 27, 2023. It provides certain protections to employees and applicants of covered employers* who have known limitations related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. The law requires covered employers to provide reasonable accommodations to workers who are experiencing these limitations.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) provides detailed information about this new law on its website at

<https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-pregnant-workers-fairness-act>

In addition to the PWFA, there are other federal laws that may apply to pregnant workers, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and the PUMP Act.

Please note that the EEOC states that, “while pregnancy itself is not a disability under the ADA, some pregnant workers may have one or more impairments related to their pregnancy that qualify as a “disability” under the ADA. An employer may have to provide that worker with a reasonable accommodation for the pregnancy-related disability.”

**Covered employers include private and public sector employers with at least 15 employees, Congress, Federal agencies, employment agencies, and labor organizations*

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **June 5-7, 2023**
Missouri Rehabilitation Association (MRA) Conference, Osage Beach
<https://www.mo-rehab.org/conference>
- **June 26-28, 2023**
Transition Training Institute, Columbia
<https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/2023-missouri-transition-training-institute-gear-future>
- **July 18-22, 2023**
Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, Columbia
<https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf.htm>
- **July 20-22, 2023**
APSE-MO Employment Summit, Columbia
<http://www.apsemo.org/events.html>
- **August 27-29, 2023**
Real Voices—Real Choices Conference, Osage Beach
<https://www.missourimhf.org/real-voices-real-choices-conference/>
- **September 27-29, 2023**
MACDDS Annual Conference, Columbia
<https://macdds.org/annual-conference/>

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



Volume 9, Number 4, August 2023

[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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GCD HOSTS ANNUAL MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

by Claudia Browner

What makes a great leader? How can you overcome barriers and reach your goals? What qualities are employers looking for in an applicant? What does disability community mean, and why is disability history an important part of the American history? These, and many other questions were answered during the 19th annual [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) for high school students with disabilities (MO-YLF), hosted by the Governor's Council on Disability and its partner agencies—Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation, MU Pre-Employment Transition Services, Paraquad, and Missouri Centers for Independent Living.



From July 18—22, 2023, a record number of 32 delegates from 17 counties in Missouri participated in the MO-YLF, at the University of Missouri's MU campus in Columbia. The delegates had the opportunity to experience college life, and to participate

in a variety of learning sessions and fun activities. The MO-YLF also provided extended leadership opportunities to the ten returning program alumni who participated as team leaders for the incoming delegates.

The program's learning topics included disability history and advocacy, self-determination, independent living, assistive technology, and how to become involved in the legislative process in Missouri.

Other highlights included keynote speaker Jordan Toma, a mentor event with successful leaders from the disability community, a community service project for the WAGS Therapy Dog Training Program, employment/

college and career day, and a resource event. The legislative day at the Capitol in Jefferson City included a special welcome from Governor Parson, who spoke to the delegates about becoming leaders in their communities. In addition, house representatives Proudie, Stinnett, Toalson Reisch,

(Continued on page 2)



Governor Parson welcomed the delegates in Jefferson City and spoke to the youth about the qualities of a good leader.



MO-YLF delegate TJ Clime pets a WAGS therapy dog

GCD HOSTS ANNUAL MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

(Continued from page 1)

and Walsh Moore conducted a bill hearing with the delegates, followed by a floor debate in the House chamber. The legislative day activities ended with a debate in the Senate chamber, lead by Senator Black.

Evening recreational activities included an adaptive sports night hosted by Midwest Adaptive Sports, a talent show and a dance with a DJ and photo booth.

Throughout the week, the delegates worked on their personal leadership plan and poster to set goals for their future. They were able to grow their leadership skills and learn about helpful resources and future leadership opportunities. The delegates graduated from the MO-YLF after presenting to staff, parents, and guests at the closing ceremony on the last day of the event. We cannot wait to see the great things these young leaders will be doing in their future!



MO-YLF delegates and staff are seated on stairs on MU campus

We appreciate and recognize all of the volunteers who participated as staff for the event, as well as the mentors, panelists and speakers. The MO-YLF would not be possible without their tireless work throughout the week.

A special thank you goes to the agencies and organizations who fund the MO-YLF through sponsorships and donations.

The MO-YLF is very grateful for their support of this life-changing program!! For more information about the MO-YLF, and the list of the program sponsors and donors, please visit

<https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.htm>

In July 2024, we will be hosting the **20th annual Missouri Youth Leadership Forum!!** Stay tuned for more information to come this fall, and share this exciting opportunity with high school students in your communities.

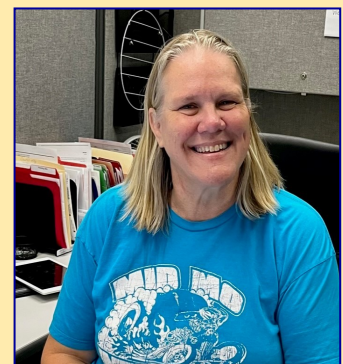


CELEBRATING GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY (GCD) WORK ANNIVERSARIES

RACHEL RACKERS—5 YEARS
JENN PETTIT—1 YEAR

CONGRATULATIONS!

WE ARE HAPPY TO HAVE YOU ON OUR TEAM!



2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES POLL COMING IN AUGUST

by Laura Mueth

The 2023 Legislative Priorities Poll is an opportunity for you to share with us, as well as state legislators and elected officials, issues you have with education, housing, transportation, employment, and health care for people with disabilities along with changes you would like to see.



The poll will be available for completion beginning on August 28 and closing on November 3 at 5:00 p.m. It has been updated to reflect changes over the last year and current issues/concerns.

Keep your eye out for the Survey Monkey link to participate. It will be distributed via email and posted on GCD's [Facebook](#) page and [Poll](#) web page. PDF versions which can be completed and returned to our office will also be available through those avenues. Our staff will be available to assist anyone who will have difficulty understanding the questions or completing it independently.

If you have not received the Poll in the past and would like to receive it directly once it is ready, contact Laura Mueth at Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov.

Because GCD wants to hear from a wide variety of individuals, we encourage sharing the Poll with anyone connected to disability issues. This includes people with disabilities, families, employers, friends, employees, medical professionals, caregivers, agency staff, community members, educators, organizations, etc. The GCD looks forward to hearing from everyone!

CALLING ALL MISSOURI ARTISTS FOR GCD POSTER CONTEST

by Claudia Browner

Don't miss your opportunity to have your artwork featured on the Governor's Council on Disability's 2023 poster in celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM).

All Missouri residents are invited to participate in the annual poster contest. You must submit your artwork by September 15 to be eligible to win. The winner will receive a framed copy of the poster and the poster will be shared statewide during the month of October and featured on the GCD website, annual report, newsletter, and social media.

NDEAM is celebrated nationwide in October to recognize and highlight the important contributions of workers with disabilities. This year's NDEAM theme—Advancing Access and Equity—recognizes the importance of ensuring people with disabilities have equal opportunity to prepare for and succeed in employment. In addition to this theme, artwork can relate to Inclusion, Employment and Community.



Find more information and contest rules at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest>

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability—Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Joan Bergstrom, Ed. D, Lee's Summit
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
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MISSOURI CLAIM NOW CALLED MISSOURI SHIP

by Claudia Browner

The Missouri Department of Commerce and Insurance (DCI) has been providing valuable assistance to Missourians with Medicare for the past 30 years, through its Missouri CLAIM program. The program has now been rebranded as Missouri SHIP (State Health Insurance Assistance Program).

Funded through a grant from the Administration for Community Living (ACL) in coordination with Missouri Connections for Health, the Missouri SHIP program offers free assistance to Missourians eligible for Medicare, and their caregivers. The program helps consumers choose the best plan to meet their needs and assists those with limited income in determining whether they qualify for a low-income subsidy and/or Medicare Savings Program.

Missourians can contact Missouri SHIP for free assistance during Medicare open enrollment (October 15—December 7), or anytime throughout the year, by phone at 800-390-3330 or online at missouriship.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **August 10-20, 2023 ([August 16 Senior Day](#))**
Missouri State Fair, Sedalia
<https://www.mostatefair.com/>
- **August 27-29, 2023**
Real Voices—Real Choices Conference, Osage Beach
<https://www.missourimhf.org/real-voices-real-choices-conference/>
- **September 27-29, 2023**
MACDDS Annual Conference, Columbia
<https://macdds.org/annual-conference/>
- **September 28-29, 2023**
Center for Disability Inclusion—Inclusion Summit, Kansas City
<https://www.centerfordisabilityinclusion.org/inclusion-summit-2023.html>
- **October 16-17, 2023**
Emergency Management Disability Awareness Training, Adair County
<https://frdat.niagara.edu/training/trainings/>
- **October 18-19, 2023**
Emergency Management Disability Awareness Training, Warren County
<https://frdat.niagara.edu/training/trainings/>

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



Volume 9, Number 5, October 2023

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CELEBRATING NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

by Claudia Browner

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is celebrated nationwide throughout October to recognize the vital role that people with disabilities play in making the nation's workforce diverse and inclusive.



Initiated by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy in 1945, NDEAM recognizes the contributions of employees with disabilities, brings awareness to employment issues and inclusive hiring practices, and reminds employers of the importance of ensuring people with disabilities have equal opportunity to prepare for and succeed in employment. The 2023 NDEAM theme is "Advancing Access & Equity".

In Missouri, October is also recognized as Disability History Month to educate and raise awareness about the valuable contributions of people with disabilities and the proud heritage of disability history. Schools are encouraged to provide instruction in disability history and the disability rights movement through curricula, assemblies, and activities throughout the month.

Governor Parson has issued two proclamations, designating October as [National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#) and [Disability History Month](#) in Missouri.

The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) recognizes and celebrates NDEAM by raising awareness about employment inclusion through its annual [poster contest](#) and hosting a [Virtual NDEAM Exhibit](#) on the Disability Web Portal. The exhibit provides background information and history of NDEAM, disability history, ideas to celebrate, employment resources for Missourians with disabilities, and other resources.

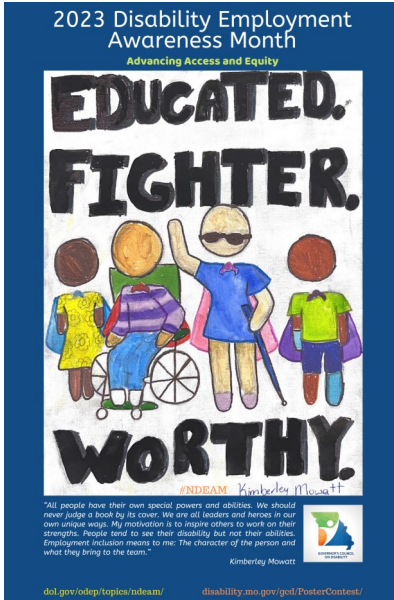
What can you do to celebrate and support NDEAM?

- [Display the GCD NDEAM poster in your office](#)
- [Check out the gallery of GCD NDEAM poster entries](#)
- [Watch and share the NDEAM Awareness Video](#)
- [Learn how to make your meetings, programs, and communications accessible to all](#)
- [Host or participate in diversity and disability awareness training](#)
- [Visit the NDEAM virtual exhibit for information and ideas to participate](#)

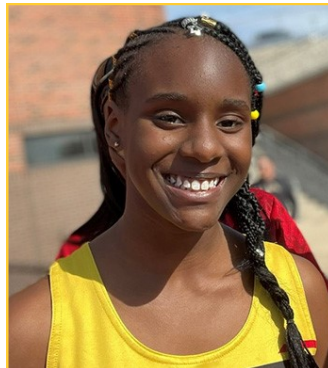
If you would like to request a printed GCD NDEAM poster, please contact the Governor's Council on Disability at gcd@oa.mo.gov or 573-751-2600.

GCD ANNOUNCES NDEAM POSTER CONTEST WINNER

by Claudia Browner



The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) hosts an annual poster contest celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), to raise awareness about the importance of employment inclusion for individuals with disabilities. Missouri residents can participate by submitting original artwork illustrating what employment inclusion means to them.



From the large number of entries the GCD received this year, voluntary judges representing the Council, state department liaisons, and Office of Administration team members selected artwork submitted by Kimberley Mowatt as the winner. Congratulations, Kimberley!

The GCD invites you to check out the **slideshow all of the artwork entries** on the [GCD NDEAM Poster Contest website](https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest/).

The GCD invites agencies, organizations, and employers in Missouri to display the poster throughout the month of October in celebration and recognition of NDEAM. The poster can be downloaded from the GCD NDEAM Poster Contest website. To request a printed copy, please contact the GCD at gcd@oa.mo.gov or 573-751-2600.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES POLL NOW OPEN

by Laura Mueth

The House and Senate have begun preparations for the 2024 legislative session. Committees and taskforces have met over the last few months to receive updates and new information on various topics.



The 2023 Legislative Priorities Poll (Poll) is available for completion by Missouri residents. The results will be shared with all state legislators and other state elected officials by the end of 2023 via a written report, so the issues can be considered in discussions as preparations continue for the 2024 legislative session. Responses will also be used by GCD staff and our Council members to create legislative priorities.

The Poll can be completed and submitted online at [Legislative Priorities Poll](https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/legislative_priorities_poll.htm). If you would prefer to complete a PDF version, please contact Laura Mueth at Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov to receive a printable or fillable PDF. All versions can also be found on the [Legislative Priorities Poll web page](#). PDFs and paper copies can be returned via fax (573-526-4109), email (gcd@oa.mo.gov), or mail (Governor's Council on Disability, 301 West High Street, Room 620, P.O. Box 1668, Jefferson City, MO 65102-1668).

Assistance with completion is available by contacting the GCD office at 800-877-8249 or 573-751-2600.

All Poll responses must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, November 3, 2023.

DATES SET FOR 2024 MO-YLF—LEARN ABOUT THE PROGRAM

by Rachel Rackers

The **Missouri Youth Leadership Forum** (MO-YLF) planning committee is already gearing up for the 2024 MO-YLF, which will be held July 16—20, 2024 at the University of Missouri Columbia campus.

Each year, MO-YLF provides high school students with disabilities a week-long college setting experience, where they learn about disability history, advocacy, the legislative process, transition to employment or higher education, adaptive technology, and adaptive sports. It is important for students with disabilities to learn skills by example and interactions with others who share similar experiences, which is what MO-YLF provides. The program is designed specifically to help students grow into leaders. Students are selected to become delegates at the forum based on an application process. In addition to leadership skills, the delegates learn to set life goals, advocate for their needs, and give back to the community.



Applications for staff, volunteers, and delegates will be available on our website by mid-October. The deadline for delegate applications is March 31 and staff applications are due April 15. For more information and the online application, please visit <http://disability.mo.gov/gcd/yf.htm>

The Governor's Council on Disability will be hosting several **FREE** informational webinars about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) this fall and next spring prior to the application deadline. Each webinar will provide an in-depth look into the MO-YLF and what participants will learn/experience during the program. These live webinars will be offered at various dates and times. Be sure to look for upcoming announcements and details on our social media pages and MO-YLF website. You can also sign up for our GCD email listserv to receive information and updates on the many programs that our agency has to offer. Please email us at gcd@oa.mo.gov to be added to our listserv.

Please help us share these exciting opportunities with students, parents, teachers, and colleagues!

MO-YLF ANNIVERSARY AND ALUMNI REUNION

by Rachel Rackers

In July 2024, the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) will be celebrating its 20th program year! The Youth Leadership Forum was first developed by the California Governor's Committee for Employment of Disabled Persons in 1992. The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy set forth to replicate this initiative in all 50 states. Missouri held its first Youth Leadership Forum in 2001 and has grown tremendously throughout the years. Since the inception of the program, a total of 391 alumni have graduated from MO-YLF, representing 73 of the 114 Missouri counties, plus the city of St. Louis. Our past and future successes wouldn't be possible without the collaboration and support of our partners; Paraquad, MU Pre-Employment Transition Services, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and MOCIL.

It's exciting to add alumni to our YLF family every year and to watch each of them blossom after graduating from the program. To celebrate the MO-YLF's 20th program year, the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) and its collaborating partners will be hosting an Alumni Reunion on July 15, 2024, at the University of Missouri Columbia campus. Be sure to follow our social media pages (Facebook and Instagram handles are listed below) to stay up to date on the newest event information. If you are a MO-YLF alumni who haven't been receiving emails from GCD, please contact our office by email (gcd@oa.mo.gov) to provide an up-to-date email address.



Facebook

MyLife Alumni Association (@MoylfAlumni)
Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (@MOLeadershipForum)
Governor's Council on Disability (@MissouriGCD)

Instagram

Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (@mo_ylf)

EVERYONE IS WELCOME IN MISSOURI STATE PARKS

Information provided by: Department of Natural Resources, Missouri State Parks Division

New chairs help visitors with mobility issues navigate trails, beaches

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Division of State Parks recently received new chairs for visitors with mobility challenges. Using the chairs, visitors can now navigate both land and water.



Track chairs are electric all-terrain wheelchairs that offer guests with mobility challenges the opportunity to partake in outdoor activities. With a track chair, they can explore trails and visit parts of Missouri state parks or historic sites that are not suitable for regular wheelchairs. These sturdier, more rugged chairs use tank-like tracks instead of wheels to allow guests to traverse some of the rougher, uneven trails found in Missouri state parks. All-terrain track chairs can navigate through snow, water, mud, sand and other rough conditions.

"Everyone should have the opportunity to explore and enjoy our parks and historic sites," said David Kelly, director of Missouri State Parks. "Wheelchairs provide important mobility for their users, but they aren't always able to navigate our trails. Our all-terrain track chairs can!"

Missouri State Parks currently has three track chairs: one at Bryant Creek State Park in Ava, one at Battle of Lexington State Historic Site in Lexington, and one at Elephant Rocks State Park in Belleview. Bennett Spring State Park, outside of Lebanon, has applied for a grant to purchase another chair. Using the track chair is free. Reservations must be made at least two days in advance. Also, a friend or family member 18 years or older must go along to help, because park representatives are not always available or able to help users transfer to or from the chair.

"Missouri state parks are open for everyone to enjoy, regardless of ability," Kelly said. "We want all of our visitors to be able to discover the beauty of our parks and historic sites. This adaptive equipment will open up the trails that were once inaccessible to people with mobility issues." In addition to track chairs, St. Joe, Echo Bluff and Sam A. Baker state parks have adaptive beach chairs for use in the water. Beach chairs allow wheelchair users, people with special needs or those who just need some assistance, the chance to play and splash in the water.

To find out how to reserve a track chair, visit mostateparks.com/action-trackchair.

Visit <https://dnr.mo.gov/communications/news/everyone-welcome-missouri-state-parks> to read the full content of the article.

988 ADDS AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE SERVICES

by Claudia Browner

The [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](https://988lifeline.org) is now offering American Sign Language (ASL) services for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, in an effort to enhance accessibility and inclusivity in behavioral health care.

The 988 Lifeline is a network of state and local call centers offering help to individuals during a mental health or substance-use related crisis, supported by the US Department of Health & Human Services through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Since its launch in July 2022, the 988 Lifeline has received more than 5.5 million calls, texts and chats.

To connect to a 988 Lifeline counselor in ASL, individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing can dial 988 from a videophone, or click the "ASL Now" button on 988lifeline.org and follow the prompts.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis, call or text 988, or chat 988lifeline.org for help.



Missouri Governor's Council on Disability—Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
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- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
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DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGISLATIVE DAY 2024

by Laura Mueth

SAVE THE DATE!

The 2024 Disability Rights Legislative Day will be Wednesday, March 13, 2024. The planning committee will begin meeting in the coming months to start preparing for this wonderful and empowering day.

Please subscribe to updates on the [Disability Rights Legislative Day website](#) to be kept aware of developments and registration information.

More information coming soon!



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **October 9-11, 2023**
[Virtual ADA Coordinator Conference](#)
- **October 16-17, 2023**
Emergency Management Disability Awareness Training, Adair County
<https://frdat.niagara.edu/training/trainings/>
- **October 18-19, 2023**
Emergency Management Disability Awareness Training, Warren County
<https://frdat.niagara.edu/training/trainings/>
- **November 7, 2023**
Equity Summit—Advancing Innovation in Rural Education
<https://eduvents.dhewd.mo.gov/equity-summit/>

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



Volume 9, Number 6, December 2023

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- Smart Home Technology to reach your goals
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RECOGNIZING LEADERS IN INCLUSION AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

by Claudia Browner

As the year 2023 is coming to a close, the Governor's Council on Disability is looking to honor and recognize this year's leaders in Inclusion and Youth Leadership through its annual Inclusion and Youth Leadership Awards programs.

The [Inclusion Award](#) recognizes and honors Missourians who demonstrate excellence in leadership for best practices in inclusion of individuals with disabilities.

The Inclusion Award and one Honorable Mention are presented annually to recognize private and public employers, individuals, businesses or organizations in Missouri that have worked toward greater disability inclusion by taking exceptional, proactive, and innovative measures to integrate and mainstream people with disabilities into their programs, activities, and operations.

Submit your nominations now for at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/inclusionawards>

The [Youth Leadership Award](#) recognizes exceptional Missouri youths (ages 16-26) with disabilities who exhibit remarkable leadership qualities and make a positive impact in the lives of others in their communities. A youth with a disability shall meet one or more of these criteria to be eligible for the award:

- Demonstrate leadership skills to improve the lives of individuals living with disabilities
- Advocate for positive changes and inclusive practices for the disability community
- Advocate for accessibility of programs or environments
- Engage in activities to promote disability awareness and etiquette

These leadership and advocacy efforts can be demonstrated at a local, regional, or state level.

Submit your nominations now at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/youthleadershipawards>

New this year, in addition to receiving the recognition award, winners will receive a digital badge to showcase their accomplishments. The badge can be displayed on the winners' websites, letterhead, LinkedIn profiles, email signatures, and resumes.

Nomination deadline for both awards is January 31, 2024. The awards will be presented at the Power Up Assistive Technology Conference & Expo in Columbia in April 2024.

Questions? Call 573-751-2600 or email gcd@oa.mo.gov

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS



2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES POLL RESULTS

by Laura Mueth

The 2023 Legislative Priorities Poll (Poll) ended in early November. Five hundred ninety-eight people from 65 counties in Missouri completed it. The 2024 legislative priorities for the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) will be:

1. The State of Missouri updating websites to include more language that is direct and easy to understand for those with reading or writing difficulties
2. The Personal Care Attendant/Aide/Direct Support Professional workforce providing critical services
3. The legislature providing funding for people to renovate or build homes which would allow them to age in place
4. The State of Missouri ensuring Person First Language is being used on all state associated websites
5. A freeze on property taxes for people with disabilities

The priorities were determined by the Poll questions receiving the highest combined strongly agree and agree response percentages.



The Legislative Priorities Poll report showing the results for all of the questions asked has been posted on the [Annual Legislative Priorities Poll page](#). The report and all open answer responses have been shared with representatives, senators, and elected officials prior to December 1. Thank you to everyone who took the time to contribute this year.

2024 LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION PROJECT COMING SOON

by Laura Mueth



Governor's Council on Disability Legislative Education Project (LEP)

Empower yourself to champion public policies that affect individuals with disabilities in Missouri. A comprehensive understanding of the legislative process can equip you with the necessary tools to effect lasting change.



**Join us for one of our free
online webinars by
signing up now!**

- January 11, 2024, 9:00-10:30 AM
- February 8, 2024, 7:00-8:30 PM
- March 7, 2024, 9:00-10:30 AM
- March 21, 2024, 1:00-2:30 PM

REGISTER ONLINE



Get Ready for the Webinar!
Visit the [LEP website](#) to access educational videos about the legislative process in Missouri and gather more information.

If you have any questions, please contact us at 573.751.2600 or visit disability.mo.gov/gcd/LEP.htm

The Legislative Education Project (LEP) webinars will be offered again in 2024. These are 90 minute sessions via WebEx discussing Missouri's legislative process, tips for communicating with legislators, and some disability related bills which have been filed. Individuals and groups are welcome to participate. The dates and times are:

- Thursday, January 11, 2024 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM
- Thursday, February 8, 2024 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM
- Thursday, March 7, 2024 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM
- Thursday, March 21, 2024 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM

These are free. However, registration is required. To sign up, complete the [LEP Registration Form](#). If you require accommodations to participate, please register a minimum of two weeks prior to the webinar you will be attending.

If you would like to discuss the offerings, contact Laura Mueth at Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov.

To learn more about the LEP or to view related videos, modules, and/or documents, visit the [LEP web page](#).

APPLY NOW FOR THE 2024 MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

by Rachel Rackers

The [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) (MO-YLF) planning committee is already gearing up for the 2024 MO-YLF, which will be held July 16–20 at the University of Missouri, Columbia campus.

Each year, the MO-YLF provides high school students with disabilities (ages 16-21) a five-day college setting experience. It brings together approximately 30 students from across Missouri to develop leadership skills and career awareness. Through interactive sessions, delegates gain a deeper understanding of their disabilities and those of their peers, while analyzing strengths and weaknesses to become self-determined individuals. MO-YLF also equips students with knowledge of the legislative process and disability laws, empowering them to advocate for themselves and others.

With visits to the state Capitol and a mock legislative session, delegates learn firsthand how laws are made. The program fosters self-advocacy skills and promotes disability awareness, and connects students with community resources for independent living. Fun group activities facilitate networking and the formation of lifelong friendships. MO-YLF ultimately leaves students with renewed confidence and a clearer vision for their post-secondary goals in education, employment, and independent living. Join MO-YLF for an unforgettable journey of self-discovery and leadership development, together transforming the future for young leaders with disabilities.



MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM
July 16-20, 2024
 University of Missouri
 in Columbia, MO

What topics are covered?

- ✓ SELF-ADVOCACY
- ✓ DISABILITY PRIDE
- ✓ ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY
- ✓ INDEPENDENT LIVING
- ✓ EMPLOYMENT SKILLS
- ✓ HIGHER EDUCATION
- ✓ LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY
- ✓ MENTORSHIP
- ✓ COMMUNITY SERVICE
- ✓ AND MORE!

The Youth Leadership Forum is designed for young adults with disabilities to learn from successful leaders and role models. Participants gain knowledge about their own and others' disabilities, develop self-determination skills, and learn about leadership styles, disability laws, and the legislative process. The forum equips students with the tools to achieve their post-secondary goals in education, employment, and independent living; All while having fun and making lifelong friends!

TO LEARN MORE AND APPLY, VISIT
[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/2024YLF](https://tinyurl.com/2024YLF)

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS
 MARCH 31, 2024 **APPLY NOW**

Questions? 573-751-2600 gcd@oa.mo.gov

Applications for delegates, staff, and volunteers are now available on our website.

The application deadlines are March 31, 2024, for delegates (youth) and April 15, 2024, for staff/volunteers. There is no cost for accepted delegates to attend the program. The program is funded through sponsorships and donations.

For more information or to apply, visit <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf>. If you have any questions about the GCD's youth programs, please contact Rachel Rackers at rachel.rackers@oa.mo.gov or 573-751-2600.

Please help us share both of these exciting leadership training opportunities with students, parents, teachers, and colleagues!

MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM INFORMATIONAL WEBINARS

by Rachel Rackers



**Sign up today for our
 LAST MO-YLF webinar
 of 2023!**

WEDNESDAY
 December 13, 2023
 6:00-7:00 PM

REGISTER HERE

The Governor's Council on Disability is offering free informational webinars for the [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum \(MO-YLF\)](#). Each webinar will include information on what takes place during MO-YLF, what the benefits are for a student to attend, and information on the application process.

All prospective delegates, educators, service providers, and families are welcome to register and attend!

The next webinar will be offered on Wednesday, December 13, 2023, from 6:00-7:00 PM. Registration is required to attend. Please complete the Webinar Registration Form at <https://tinyurl.com/moylfwebinar>

Additional webinar dates and times will be added after the new year.

Please visit the [MO-YLF website](#) to register for one of the upcoming dates.

NEWS AND UPDATES FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

by Claudia Browner

U.S. Department of Transportation publishes Airline Passengers Bill of Rights

The U.S. Department of Transportation, in collaboration with Air Carrier Access Act Advisory Committee to create the [Airline Passengers with Disabilities Bill of Rights](#), which summarizes the fundamental rights of airline passengers with disabilities.

Those rights are:

1. The right to be treated with dignity and respect
2. The right to receive information about services and aircraft capabilities and limitations
3. The right to receive information in an accessible format
4. The right to accessible airport facilities
5. The right to assistance at airports
6. The right to assistance on the aircraft
7. The right to travel with an assistive device or service animal
8. The right to receive seating accommodations
9. The right to accessible aircraft features
10. The right to resolution of a disability-related issue



Watch the [Airline Passengers Bill of Rights YouTube Video](#)

To get more information about the Airline Passengers with Disabilities Bill of Rights, visit transportation.gov/disabilitybillofrights

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services invests in improving Health Care Access for People with Disabilities

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently announced more the \$8 million through 18 awards to train primary care medical students, physician assistant students, and medical residents in providing better more appropriate care for individuals with physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities, and those with limited English proficiency.

More information is available in the complete [news release](#).

Justice Department Issues Guidance on Americans with Disabilities Act and Employment Services for People with Disabilities

The Justice Department's Civil Rights Division has issued this guidance to help state and local governments understand their roles and responsibilities, and people with disabilities understand their rights under the federal law in this area. The guidance provides an overview of the ADA, the ADA's integration mandate, and the types of employment and day services that are often offered to people with disabilities. It then answers nine questions about how the ADA applies to those service systems.

The guidance may be found on ada.gov at <https://www.ada.gov/resources/olmstead-employment-qa/>

Google unveils new accessibility features for Maps, Search & more

Google has recently announced new accessibility features for its Maps, Search, Assistant, Chrome, and additional products. By updating those apps, it will provide features that help individuals with disabilities accomplish tasks easier, such as taking selfies, getting walking directions on Maps, and searching the web. Business owners can now update their business profile to indicate they are "disabled-owned", which could help reach a broader customer base. Additional features include wheelchair-accessible information for more places, new customization options for Assistant routines, and enhanced screen reader capabilities.

More information is available at <https://about.google/belonging/disability-inclusion/product-accessibility/>

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability—Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Joan Bergstrom, Ed. D, Lee's Summit
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Traci Ritter, Cape Girardeau
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- James Trout, St. Louis
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability—Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Rachel Rackers, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

MO-YLF IS CELEBRATING ITS 20TH PROGRAM YEAR

by Rachel Rackers

The [2024 Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) (MO-YLF) will be the state's 20th program year since it was brought to Missouri in 2001.

To celebrate this milestone, the MO-YLF planning committee will be hosting an **Alumni Reunion** in July 2024 at the University of Missouri in Columbia.

We would like to invite all 391 MO-YLF alumni to join us for this exciting event! There will be more details and RSVPs in the upcoming weeks. We hope to see all of you there!

For more information on the [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) program and events, please visit our MO-YLF website at disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf



Smart Home Technology to meet your goals

by Claudia Browner

The Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation has created a website highlighting their [Smart Homes Made Simple](#) project to raise awareness about how individuals with disabilities can gain control over their environment and live more independently and safely in their own homes using smart home technology.

The website features a Guide to Smart Home Technology and a number of goals to choose from, including communication, controlling the environment, remote supports from a caregiver, personal assistant, safety/security, telehealth/health. A self-assessment is also available for those who are unsure what technologies might assist them in reaching their goals. Find out more at <https://smarthomesmadesimple.org>



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **January 3, 2024**
Missouri Legislative Session begins
- **January 11, 2024**
[Emergency Management Disability Awareness Training Follow-Up Webinar](#)
- **March 13, 2024**
[Disability Rights Legislative Day](#)
- **April 8—9, 2024**
[Power Up Assistive Technology Conference & Expo](#) and GCD Awards presentation

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.